



Speech
Ambassador Lewis A. Lukens
May 31, 2013, 10:00 a.m.
Mame Andalla Cissé Base, Dakar

(As prepared)

Welcome all to Senegal's 2nd (second) Aviation Education Weekend. This incredible array of activities is the result of a great team effort between the governments of the United States and Senegal. The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation "Safe Skies for Africa" program officers have been working hard with the Senegalese Armée de l'Air, ASAAE (Friends of Aviation in Sénégal), AFPAC (Women in Aviation), and ANACIM (Sénégal Civil Aviation & Meteorology Authority) to bring an understanding of aviation into the hands and lives of the Senegalese public, especially youth. I would also like to especially recognize Madame Mame Andalla Cissé Base for hosting this event today.

Children from Dakar, Saint-Louis, Louga, Thiès, Kaolack, Mbour, Fatick and Jourbel, welcome! (*repeat "Welcome!" in English*). I hope that all of you -- boys and girls -- find inspiration here today. Africa needs talented youngsters to pursue education in aviation-related fields, and we hope that this day will inspire you. I know that you have studied about the great French pilot Jean Mermoz. Maybe you have even heard of the American female pilot Amelia Earhart. These are great people in history who have allowed us to dream with them, and appreciate exploring our world through air travel. We celebrate them today as we celebrate achievements from Senegal's own pilots as well.

While you may think that aviation is just flying planes, it actually includes many positions, including mechanics, parachutists, airport personnel, air traffic controllers, firefighters, aviation doctors, and environmental specialists. All of these people work with airplane pilots to connect the world's people through flight. Perhaps these are jobs that might interest you.

I am speaking to you in French today, but you will see that much of this day is focused on English. That is because English is the "language of aviation." To be an international pilot or controller requires a high level of English competency, and I hope that you are practicing your English every day! Throughout this weekend, the U.S. government aviation agencies, as well as cadets from the U.S. Army, will be demonstrating the importance of English in Aviation, so enjoy what they offer you.

Regardless of your career goals, I invite all of you to experience the excitement and fun that aviation has always represented. Perhaps you will be inspired by these amazing aircraft to consider all of the possibilities in your lives. You all have choices to make about your futures, and I encourage you to think as broadly as the wings of that Senegal Airlines Airbus 320 plane over there.

The United States is proud to be working with our Senegal and other African partners to develop future aviation experts so that we can all benefit from aviation's influences on economic development by facilitating the safe and efficient movement of people and goods among African countries. Thank you all for coming, and "folène"! (FO-len)